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ABSTRACT

Developmental education is based on a learning model as opposed to a teaching model. It requires strong communication between the student and teacher and depends upon a supportive learning environment. Some of the components of developmental education are: (1) diagnostic services which seek to answer why the student cannot learn; (2) independent study, including program flexibility, individualized learning, language skills laboratories, and programmed instruction; (3) an instructional support center with specialists providing appropriate support materials to the faculty; (4) human development instruction, concentrating on the dynamics of human interaction, career exploration and the development of study skills; and (5) human support services, providing human contact through counseling to assist learning, tutorial programs, and peer counseling. Variables enhancing successful learning include a nonpunitive grading system, a human support system and supportive campus environment, variable-time courses to encourage the student to proceed at his own pace, positive expectations, granting of credit for all courses offered, a minimum level of financial assistance to allow the student to concentrate on learning, and value exploration. The attempt is to educate the whole person, not just reward academic performance. (KJC)

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DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

One of the problems in talking about a new concept is giving it some kind of frame of reference for understanding. Developmental Education is a thrust that has its roots going back ten or fifteen years to several programs that funded special education projects; special education not in traditional terms, but special education in terms of looking at new target groups and addressing the question: How can we serve them in education?

Rather than looking at an instructional delivery system, something quite familiar these days, Developmental Education looks at the interface between any given instructional system and how it connects with the target groups. It looks at the interface between the learner and the people doing the teaching or the learning mode and the student. Alot of times, the connection is not a very solid one. Data comes back from students and it is found that the high ideals, the time, and the energy put into a program doesn't yield the expected high results.

Developmental Education takes as a point of responsiveness, a point of feedback, the student himself, and it is based upon a learning model. It is not based upon a teaching model. The assumption being that if it is based on learning, quality communication with the learner is a must. Honest feedback from the learner about what is happening to him in the learning process becomes a critical ingredient of the process. The thrust is to bring together an interdependent team of specialists whose purpose is to enhance the learning environment and support services for students.

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Some of the components of Developmental Education are:

1. DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES: Why can't the student learn? What is the nature of the learning disability? There are a multitude of reasons, any one of which may be the answer to the problem. Unless some diagnostic work is done, the nature of the student's individual problem will not be found. In the past, there has been too great a reliance on standardized testing to yield the answers. Some people estimate that standardized testing only accounts for maximally about 25% of the variance in learning problems. What about the other 75%? Twenty-five percent doesn't seem to be a very good gamble when working with someone's life in terms of their educational goals.

2. INDEPENDENT STUDY:

   a. Flexible Individually Tailored Curricula: Programs and curricula developed for a specific target group often do not fit very well with all the people in that target group. There may be a need for modification. Who has the authority to make changes? So often a program gets set in concrete and a few years later there may be a change in student needs or student interests that can't be accommodated. Then, the need for flexibility becomes apparent. Can the student be offered some things that fit his interests and abilities and then later move into a curricula? As the American Association for Higher Education has suggested, maybe the first year of college could be used as a year of exploration for many students.

   b. Individualization of Learning: Every person has an optimum learning mode, a way in which he/she learns best. For some, this learning style is auditorial and thus, lectures and audio tapes are very effective learning methods. For others, they may learn better visually, tactically, through interaction with others, or some combination of these modes. Also, students vary in the length of time they need to assimilate information, concepts, or skills. They also vary widely with regard to interests. One might postulate: To the degree that the differences in students can be capitalized upon through individualized learning methods, the greater the learning on the part of each student.

   c. Reading-Writing Laboratory: Often what has happened to these skills in higher education is they are cast into courses. It is very difficult to develop a course in reading or writing at the higher education level and meet all the varying needs of 15 to 20 students in a class. What is needed is to individualize as much as possible and focus on each student's particular problem. A Laboratory affords this kind of flexibility.

   d. Programmed Instruction: Programmed Instruction works well with some students. The instruction may be in a variety of formats (book, laboratory exerceise, audio tape, film, etc). The key to Programmed Instruction is that the student can do it alone, paced and scheduled at the convenience of the student.

3. INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT CENTER: This service would help faculty diversify instruction so that it has a more clear fit with student needs. It is a fact that the lecture method is an effective teaching mode for approximately 25% of all college students. For 75%, it doesn't fit very well and for some people it fits terribly. Specialists are needed to help develop support materials for the instructor. For example, the instructor may not know much about how to take an idea and conceptualize it. There are people who have the skills to collaborate with an instructor to conceptulize the instructor's ideas so that they come across as clearer ideas, and more effective and more efficient in the learning process.

4. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INSTRUCTION: This is the area that has gotten more attention nationally and created more uneasiness among educators than any other area. It emphasizes life planning. "Where am I going?" "What can I be committed to?" "What is meaningful to me?" These are questions that are seldom personally explored with students, except in a haphazard one-to-one basis when a counselor happens to latch on to a student who is in trouble. A delivery system is needed which will ensure some exploration on the part of students with regard to these important questions.

   a. Dynamics of Human Interaction: A few years ago, B. Lamar Johnson cited a study on job attrition that showed 90% of the people losing their jobs do so not because of incompetence, but because they cannot relate to people. This suggests a strong need to help people understand the human interaction process, how to communicate better, and how to work cooperatively and collaboratively with others.

   b. Career Exploration: Structured time for specifically looking at the interests of each student is needed. Education is replete with cases of people who have had terrific skills in a particular area and never developed those skills. This happens alot in the elementary school where, say for example, a student may have tremendous artistic ability, but the teacher faced with 30 students, cannot spend the time for that one student; enhancing, developing, and making that talent the focal point for that student's learning. So, somewhere along the line, art doesn't become as important, and some other things that are not as intrinsically interesting become important. Maybe the end result is that the student becomes one of those average people when he might have become a great artist. The trick is to try to focus on and bring out the special talent of each student.

      Most people are more aware of their limitations than they are their abilities. Spending the time helping the student explore his interests and to inventory his abilities can be invaluable as a stimulus to learning.

   c. Study Skills: Many students have never taken the time to learn how to learn. Learning to study is a skill which can be learned. Where a student is deficient in study skills, it takes precedence over other learnings or it will be a liability to the students.

d. Developmental Skills Courses: These have been around for a long time. Helping students get the necessary skills to help them function in college English, Reading, Math, etc., is very much a part of Developmental Education. These courses should be supported by all and not suffer as a result of the academic status hierarchy on campus.

5. HUMAN SUPPORT SERVICES: Human contact from caring and sensitivity to others is a critical motivating factor in learning. Faculty provide much of this but because of their evaluative role, they usually aren't sufficient.

   a. Learning Counseling: This new role calls for people who understand the learning process, can relate on an emotional level with students, understand and can implement a program enhancing self-concept, can work as a co-learner with students, and can design new programs to assist students with learning problems. The learning counselor must be a facilitator of learning, not a subject matter expert.

   b. Tutorial Program: There is enough research nationally to indicate that tutoring is effective; that you can take student tutors working with students who are having difficulty in a course and they can stimulate their peers to achieve higher levels of competence.

   c. Peer Counseling: There are many times when a professional counselor just cannot make the contact with a student. The degree, the office, the status, all get in the way; but another student who is sensitive, open, and concerned can often make the contact and effect a referral to a professional where there is a professional needed. Many times a professional is simply not needed. What is needed, is someone who listens and cares.

Various research on pilot programs now indicates that students previously thought to be not educable in higher education can benefit from higher education. (Rouche and Kirk.) Variables enhancing success seem to be:

1. NONPUNITIVE GRADING SYSTEM: The argument has been around that somehow if you give an "A" you have to give somebody an "F" or the "A" doesn't mean anything. Why is it that excellence cannot be prized without punishing others? The nonpunitive grading system would do away with the "F," with time limits on withdrawal from classes, with suspension, and with expulsion for academic reasons. It would allow students to proceed at their own pace.

2. HUMAN SUPPORT SYSTEM OR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: The support system requires a concerned, committed, differentiated team of staff who should have personal contact with the student. With such a system, questions such as "How are you doing?", "What is happening with you?", etc. are commonplace. It's a reorienting process to help the student stay out of his fantasy world and keep him focused on what his particular education goals are.

a. Identification with an area on the campus: This area should have a "homey" feel for the student. Conversations with students reveal that they often feel alienated in the institutions where they are enrolled. The students need a place that is like home, a place to "hang out" between classes. This is a particularly difficult problem on a commuter campus, yet it seems to be an important linking variable in the learning process. That is, an identification with the institution as an "O.K. place to be," facilitates commitment to learning.

b. Honest Feedback About Behaviors, Communication, Skills, and Personal Development: Many students have never experienced anyone sitting down and saying to them "Hey, you're not cutting it; you tell me you are interested but your behavior is one of dropping out of class and not showing up for appointments. Are you interested or not--let's talk about it." That kind of deliberate confrontation can happen when a relationship has been created with the student. If the relationship isn't there, what that confrontation could get is alot of hostility and/or defensiveness from the student.

3. VARIABLE TIME COURSES: Why does a student have to finish a course in a semester? If he needs a year to finish it, why can't he take the year? If he can finish it in four weeks, why not in four weeks? Modularization of courses facilitates individual learning rates. This means that the student can go through the modules and time isn't of any consequence any more. If he finishes all the modules in English in six weeks, he is through with English, he doesn't have to work on it any more. If he needs a semester and a half, he can take that long to finish it.

4. POWER OF EXPECTATION: It is important that these students, which we have branded in the past as slow students, remedial students, developmental students, etc., be integrated with other students on the campus. To the degree that they are treated differently, that is how they behave. The power of expectation is unbelievable. If the expectation is that they will be slow, then that is how they behave. If the expectation is "You can do the job," they will respond to it.

5. CREDIT FOR THE WORK DONE REGARDLESS OF THE WORK LEVEL: Too often the community colleges have felt that they have to do the job of the university and will only give credit to those things that will transfer to the university. It is time that the community colleges show that their primary purpose is that of serving human beings and leave to the university the job of worrying about what transfers and what doesn't. It is very clear today for any student who wants the information, what courses the university will transfer and what they won't. It doesn't seem that the transfer issue is central to the mission of a community college. Students, regardless of level, know where the "bread and butter" in higher education is. One of the first questions they will ask is: "Am I going to get credit for it? I don't want to spend my money if I am not." Thus, to offer non-credit courses is not going to suffice.

6. MINIMUM LEVEL OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: There is some evidence to suggest that many of the students with developmental skill needs come from the lower socio-economic levels. There is a positive correlation between the lower socio-economic level and achievement in education. One of the immediate problems in working with a student who hasn't performed satisfactorily is: "Can I meet some of his/her financial needs? Can I take some of these worries away so that they can concentrate on their courses?" To be able to get financial assistance can be a tremendous asset to students with developmental skill needs.

7. VALUE EXPLORATION: It is almost impossible to teach people values because they already have an intrinsic value system that is part of the socialization process they have come through. Value Exploration is a process of helping people discover those values, helping them uncover them. That takes some personal contact and some human interaction. Building a climate of trust, maybe in a small group, helping people talk about what is important to them is a way of exploring values.

Professor William Arrowsmith has said, "Almost without exception, the response of the universities to this profound hunger for education, for compelling examples of human courage and compassionate intelligence has been mean, parochial, uncomprehending, or cold. Above all, cold. The waste in sheer human incentive, in disappointment in matters where disappointment is destructive and fatal, is appalling. But what fills one with rage is the callousness of scholars, the incredible lack of human concern among humanists, the monumental indifference of the learned to human misery and need. Why, you ask, is teaching held in contempt? Because it has become contemptible by indifference." (Eurich, p. 121.)

C. R. Pace, who has done much major research on students nationally, has said, "As higher education becomes more universal, it must become more diversified, rewarding, and enhancing a greater variety of human talents and attainments, and offering wider avenues for the development of expression, insight, and knowledge. Academic grades predict academic grades; scholastic aptitude tests predict scholastic performance. But neither has much relationship to anything else--not creativity, not inventiveness, not leadership, not good

citizenship, not compassion, not aesthetic sensitivity, not expressive talent in any of the performing arts, not personal and social maturity, not mental health, not vocational success, not family happiness, not honest workmanship--let academic talent and academic performance be rewarded, but not to the exclusion of other modes of learning. For many restless students today, the college environment deals too exclusively with abstractions and theories and too little with morality and action and direct confrontation of man with the society and his environment." (Chickering, p. 332.)

These developmental issues cannot be separated from the issue of achievement. To the degree that they are separated, a university fragmentation is done to educating the whole person. There are increasing numbers of students who are unwilling to make a curricular choice upon entering college. They seem to say, "I don't see anything I am interested in." It isn't because the offerings aren't there. It is because they need some time to go through an exploration process of deciding what to "commit myself to for the next two or three years." Developmental Education endeavors to engage the student in this phasing-in period; taking the student where he is and getting him to the point where he can make some kind of commitment to education, to a career, to him or herself.

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